

Biggest Private Arms Salesman Is American

Only Governments Sell More Weaponry Than Former Instructor in U.S. Army

Exclusive to The Times from the Toronto Telegram

LONDON—He has the sort of open, chubby face that invites you to trust him on sight.

When he speaks, his voice is apt to burst into a happy, mirthful chuckle at any minute.

The impression of disciplined optimism he conveys marks him indisputably as a successful salesman. You can just picture him flying around the world selling computers.

Sam Cummings, 43, often flies round the world, but he's not selling computers. Sam Cummings, former U.S. Army weapon-instructor sergeant, former Central Intelligence Agency man, sells weaponry.

In fact, in the shadowy, clandestine world of international arms trafficking, no one (governments apart) sells more than Sam Cummings.

His vast International Armaments Corp. (Interarmco) is the biggest private arms dealer in the world—selling legitimately and often where governments fear to tread for political reasons.

Based in London

Interarm, the British end of his worldwide operation, has its main base in the peaceful west London suburb of Acton.

Within the walls of a huge warehouse there, thousands upon thousands of rifles are stacked row upon row. Metal boxes crammed with ammunition are arrayed in neat columns.

The Acton warehouse is said to contain up to 200,000 small-caliber weapons—enough to equip 12 infantry divisions.

Even Cummings, normally tight-lipped about statistics, concedes that the total round-the-world inventory of Interarmco includes at least 500,000 light arms and at least 100 million rounds of ammunition.

It is, he commented laconically, enough to equip 40 divisions—more than either the American or British forces currently have in active service.

Since he entered the arms business 17 years ago, Cummings has handled every type of weapon from 19th-century flintlock pistols to jet fighters and tanks.

You want antitank guns? Flame-throwers? Mortars? Interarm has them, or can get them for you—provided the British government OKs the deal.

Governments Lead

Interarmco is only one facet of the vast international arms trafficking business, which is worth hundreds of millions of dollars a year.

The bulk of it is done by the Big Four (America, Russia, Britain and France), either by their respective governments or private dealers.

Sometimes the governments sell their arms for political reasons. But usually it is for profit.

It's a shadowy world of hush-hush contacts, secret international flights, and, sometimes, deals with both sides in a conflict.

For the private dealer, it is invariably cash on the nail.

But when dealing with government suppliers, purchasers can often buy death on credit. Britain and America allow 10 years to pay. France five.

Apart from the legal sales by governments and private dealers like Interarm, there are the illegal dealers who make a killing wherever civil war or guerrilla insurrection breaks out.

Ever-Open Market

The Biafran conflict brought shady dealers from all over Europe. Arabian sheiks want guns to quell rebels. Desert rebels seek weapons to overthrow Arab sheiks. Insurgents in Africa need guns to train to "free" South Africa and Portuguese Mozambique.

The volatile states of South America provide an ever-open market for the arms dealers.

Crates marked "machine parts" leave European ports for the world's trouble spots. Metal cases stenciled "welding equipment" are opened in Arabian hillside hideouts to reveal modern automatic rifles.

The clandestine nature of the business makes it impossible to guess how many illegal arms dealers have grown rich on their sales.

But undoubtedly none have grown as rich as Interarmco in its legitimate business of arms dealer to the world.

Rivals in the business guess that its turnover is at \$40 million a year. Cummings is characteristically coy.

Part of his outfit's business is rehabilitating weapons for the amateur sportsman. But much of it is in selling guns as weapons of war.

Interarm has sold rifles

to Kenya to fight rebels and Somalis. It has also sold them to Pakistan and Liberia. Twenty-six Swedish jet fighters have gone to the Dominican Republic, while Cuba has received machine guns.

Cummings once proudly claimed that he could equip a 10,000-man army division at an hour's notice.

His firm has offices or agents in every potential sales area outside the Iron Curtain, and it claims to have been involved in almost every fair-sized private arms deal outside the Iron Curtain since the firm was founded.

Any fighting provides a potential market for Interarm, and when the fighting is done, there is another potential deal when the victor wishes to sell the booty.

The Six-Day War in the Middle East put a lot of Egyptian weaponry on the market, and two years ago the company purchased 203,000 weapons discarded by the South Vietnamese.

Sam Cummings, who was born in Philadelphia, acquired his first weapon when he was five years old—a Maxim gun. When called up in the U.S. Army at the end of World War II, he became a weapons instructor.

Afterwards, he worked for the CIA as a weapons expert. He entered the arms-dealing business for himself when he spent \$25,000 for an arsenal of 7,000 weapons belonging to a Panamanian police chief.